



Imprimatur,

ROBERTUS SAT,

VICE-CANCELLARIUS

OXON.





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A  
SERMON  
PREACH'D BEFORE THE  
KING

Decemb. 31. 1665.

A T  
CHRIST-CHURCH  
I N  
OXFORD.

By R. ALLESTREE, D.D. one of the  
Canons of that Church.

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*Publiſh'd by His Majesties Command.*

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O X F O R D,

Printed by W. Hall, for James Allestree,  
and Richard Davis. A. D. 1666.

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SERMON

TREATING OF THE

KING

CHRIST-CHURCH



OXFORD

By R. ALLESTREE, D.D. one of the

Chancellors of that Church

Published by the Religious Community

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II. Chap. of St. Luke, part of the 34. vers.

*Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a signe which shall be spoken against.*

**A**ND Simeon Blessed them; and said, &c. A Benediction sure of a most strange importance: If to bring forth one that is to be a large destruction, if to be deliver'd of a Child that must be for the fall of many, and the killing of the Mother's self, be blessed; if Swords and Ruines be comforts, then my Text is full of these: But if this be to Bless, what is it to fore-speak and abide ill? Yet however ominous and fatall the words are; they give us the event, and the designe too of the Blessed Incarnation of the Son of God, the Child of this Text and of this Season: a short view of Gods Counsel in it; and the Effects of it. The Effects in these particulars.

1. *This Child is for the fall of many.*
2. *For the rising again of many.*
3. *For a signe :* with the quality of that signe, he is for a signe that shall be spoken against.
2. *The Counsel and Designe of this is signified in the word here kara :* he is set, and preordain'd to be all this.

*First of the first effect, This Child is for the fall of many.*

And here I shall but only name that way whereby many men set this Child for their own fall, while they make his holy Time to be but a more solemn opportunity of sinning : We know many celebrate this great Festival with Surfeits & Excesses usual appendages of Feasting ; Oaths and Curses the ingredients of Gaming ; Dallyance and Lasciviousness the attendants of sporting, of all which this seems as it were the Anniversary, a set time for their return. Thus indeed the Israelites did solemnize the Birth of their Idol-Calf, *They sat down to Eat and Drink, and rose up to play.* And must we celebrate this Child too like that Calf, because he was born among Brutes ? And must his Votaries also be of the

the *Heard*? And he live and be worship'd al-  
wayes in a *Stable*? Because *God* became  
*man*, mult *men* therefore become *beasts*? Is it  
fit to honour that Child with Iniquity and  
Loosness, that did come into the World  
upon designs of Holiness, to settle a most strict  
Religion? Nothing can be more incongruous  
then this; and certainly there is nothing of  
Gods Counsell in it. But to you whose time  
seems nothing else but a constant Festival, al-  
wayes hath the Leisure, and the Plenties, and  
the Sports of one, who as to these things  
keep a *Christmas* all their life, this season as  
it does not seem to challenge those things to it  
self peculiarly, so I shall not now insist on  
them; but proceed to those wayes by which  
*Simeon* did Prophecy, *This Child would be for  
the fall of many in Israel.* And they are  
three,

1. *This Child* whom I but now declar'd  
*God* had prepar'd to be the *Glory* of his People  
*Israel*, yet his Birth was so inglorious, and his  
Life answerable to it, shall be so mean and  
poor, and his Death so full of shame and  
curse, that these shall prove a scandal to  
his people, who shall be offended at them,

*V. 31, 32.*

and being prepossess'd with prejudices of a Pompous Royal *Messiah*, they will not believe in this, but reject a Saviour that comes upon those disadvantages, which will therefore prove occasions of falling to them.

Rom. 9. 33.  
1 Pet. 2. 6.

That it was so is expressly said, *Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* And that it was so upon this account is clear, The great ones cry out of him, *This fellow we know not whence he is :*

John 9. 29.

Mar. 6. 3.

They that seem'd to know whence did upbraid him with it, *Is not this the Carpenter?* And therefore with a deal of scorn they que-

John 7. 48.

stion, *Do any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believe in him?* Yea, *Christ* himself knew this would be so great a scandal that in the 11 Chapter of *St. Mathew*, in the close of many Miracles which he wrought on purpose to demonstrate he was the *Messiah* he adds *vers. 6. and Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.* As if he thought his mean condition would prove a greater argument against him then his mighty works were for him: and it were a vaster Prodigy to see the Saviour of the world, the promised *Messiah*, poor and abject, then to see one cure the Blind, and heal the Lame and

*raise*

*raise the Dead* ; and they might think they had a stranger Miracle to confirm their unbelief, then any he would work to make them believe in him.

And really, that the *Kingdom* of the *Messiah*, which the *Prophets* did express in terms as high as their own *Extasies* and *Raptures*, in transported words, as if it Vied with *Gods* Dominion, both for extent and for duration, should prove at last an Empire onely over twelve poor *Fishermen* and *Publicans*, and one of them a *Traitor* too : And that He that was born this *King*, should be born in a *Stable*, while he liv'd that he should not have an *hole* to put his *Head* in, nor his *Corps* in when he *died*, but his *Grave* too must be *Charity*, this would startle any that did wait for the *Redemption* of *Israel* in those glorious expresses which the *Prophets* tract it out in. To you indeed that are *Votaries* to this *Child*, are confirm'd *Christians*, these seeming disadvantages can give no prejudice : However mean and abject his condition were, that cannot make you to despise him, who from that must needs reflect how dear you were to *God*, when for your sakes meerly he became



2 Cor. 8. 9.

'Eauydy  
ixlvvov.  
Phil. 11. 7.

came so mean and abject. He became poor, saith St. Paul; that you through his poverty might be made rich: He was made the Child of Man; that you might be made Sons of God; it was to pay the price of your Redemption that he so emptied himself; thus he valued you; and men do not despise merely because, and by those measures that they are esteem'd, these are not the true turns of love, its passionate, obliging, ravishing effects do not use to be thus required, this his great descent cannot occasion your fall, who know he descended only to assume you up to glory. But 'tis worth inquiry, why, since it was certaine, that for this, this Child should be the fall of Israel; that for this they would reject him, and the meanness of his condition would prove an unremoveable obstruction to their belief, as it is to this day: Why yet he would choose to be born in a condition so in the utmost extremum to his own nature, so all contradiction to his Divinity, and so seemingly opposite to the very end of his coming.

The Jew indeed, will find no excuse for his infidelity from this condition: for what ever that were, yet those Miracles that made the

the

the Devils to *confess* him, brought conviction enough to make *Jews* *inexcusable*. And it was obvious to observe, that He who *fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes*, till they left more then was set before them, needed not to be in a condition of want or meanness, if it were not otherwise more needful he should not abound. God, that when He brought this first begotten Son into the world, said, Let all the Angels of God worship him, might have put him into an estate which all mankind most readily would have done Homage too: as easily have dress'd his Person with a blaze of *Pompe* and *Splendor*, as his Birth-day with a *Starre*, If there had not been necessity it should be otherwise. And such there was. For when the fulness both of time and iniquity was come, when Vice could grow no further, but did even cry for Reformation, and when the Doctrine that must come to give the rules of this Reformation, was not only to wage War with flesh and blood, with those desires which constitution gives, but which perpetual universal custome had confirm'd, and which their Gods also, as well as inclinations, did contribute to, which their Original sin,

and

Matth. 14.  
19, 20, 21.

Heb. 1. 6.



and their Religion equally fomented; for Vice was then the *Worship* of the world; Sins had their *Temples*, Theft its Deity, and Drunkenness its God; *Adultery* had many, and to prostitute their bodies was most sacred; and their very *Altar-fires* did kindle these foul heats, whence *Uncleanness* is so often call'd *Idolatry* in Scripture: And besides all this, all the *Philosophy*, and all the power of the world engag'd in the belief and practise of this, and resolv'd with all their wit and force to keep it so. When it was thus, the Doctrine that must come to oppose, controul, reform, all this must come either arm'd with fire and sword, design to settle it selfe by conquest, or come in a way of meekness and of suffering. The first of these Religion cannot possibly design, because it cannot aime to settle that by violence, which cannot be forc'd, and where 'tis force, is not Religion. One may as well invade, and hope to get a conquest over thoughts, and put a mind in chains, and force a man to will against his will. All such motives are incompetent to demonstrate Doctrines, for how ever successful their force proves, yet it cannot prove the Doctrines true; for by that Argument

it

it proves, that Religion that it *seem* true, it proves that it *destrayes* was true before, while it prevail'd and had the power. Had *this Child* come so, he had only given such a testimony to to the truth of *Christianity*, as *Heathenisme* had before, and *Turcisme* hath since: He might indeed, have drown'd the wicked world again in another deluge, of their own blood: but sure, never had reform'd it thus: Therefore, That Religion, that must oppose the Customs, and the Powers of the world, upon Principles of Reason and Religion, must do it by *Innocence* and *Patience*, by *doing good*, and (which was necessary, then by consequence, as the world stood,) by *suffering evil*: parting with all, not only the advantages, but necessities of this life, and life its self too, where they stood in competition, and were inconsistent with mens duties, and their expectations: and by this means, they must shew the world that their Religion did *bring* in a better hope, then that which all the profits, pleasures, glories of this world can entertain and flatter,

Thus they did, and thus they did prevail for the first ages of the Church, were but so

Heb. 7. 19.

03. 11. 0311

many centuries of men, that entertain'd Christianity with the contempt of the world, and life it self. They, knew to put themselves into Christs Service and Religion, was the same thing, as to set themselves aside for spoyle and rapine, dedicate themselves to poverty and scorn, to racks and tortures, and to Butchery it self. Yet they enter'd into it; did not onely renounce the pomps and vanities of the world in their Baptism, when they were new born to God; quench their affections to them, in those waters; but renounce'd them, even to the death; drown'd their affections to them, in their own heart blood: ran from the world into flames, and fled faster from the satisfactions and delights of earth, then those flames mounted to their Element and Sphere: In fine, they became Christians so, as if they had been Candidates of Death, and only made themselves Apprentises of Martyrdom. Now, if it were not possible, it should be otherwise then thus, as the world stood, then it was necessary that the Captaine of Salvation, should lead on, goe before, this noble Army of Martyrs; if it were necessary that they must leave all who followed Him, then it was

11. 10

Heb. 11. 10

was not possible that He should be here in a State of Plenty, Splendor, and Magnificence, but of Poverty, and Meanness; giving an example to his followers, whose condition could not but be such. To give which example, was it seems, of more necessity, then by being born in Royal Purple, to prevent the fall of many in Israel, who for his condition despis'd him.

I am not so vain, as to hope to perswade any from this great Example here, to be in love with Poverty, and with a low condition, by telling them, this Birth hath consecrated meanness; that we must not scorn those things, in which our God did choose to be install'd, that humility is, it seems, the proper dress for Divinity to shew it self in. But when we consider, if this Child had been born in a condition of Wealth and Greatness, the whole Nation of the Jews would have receiv'd him; whereas that he chose, prov'd an occasion of falling to them; Yet, that God should think it much more necessary, to give us an example of Humility and Poverty below expression; then it was necessary that that whole Nation

Luk. 1. 48.

Luk. 2. 24.  
compared  
with Lev.  
12. 6, 8.

Luk. 11, 12

should believe on him: When of all the Virgins of that People, which God had to choose one out to overshadow, and impregnate with the Son of God, He chose one of the meepest, (for he hath regarded the low estate of his Handmaiden, said she,) and one of the poorest too, for she had not a Lamb to offer, but was purifyed, in forma pauperis. When he would reveal this Birth also, that was to be the joy of the whole Earth, he did it to none of that Nation, but a few poor shepherds, who were labouring with midnight-watches over their Flocks; none of all the great ones, that were then at ease, and lay in softs, was thought worthy to have notice of it: Lastly, when the Angels make that poverty a signe to know the Saviour by. This shall be a signe unto you, You shall find the Babe wrapt in swadling cloaths, and lay'd in a Manger: as if the Manger were sufficient testimony to the Christ, and this great meanness were an evidence 'twas the Messiah. From all these together, we may easily discover what the temper is of Christianity. You see here the institution of your Order: the First-born of the Sons of God, born but

brought

s. 2

to



to such an Estate. And what is so Original to the Religion, what was born and bred with it, cannot easily be divided from it. *Generatio Christi generatio populi Christiani, natalis Capitis natalis Corporis.* The body and the head have the same kind of birth, and to that which Christ is born to, Christianity it self is born. Neither can it ever otherwise be entertain'd in the heart of any man, but with poverty of spirit, with neglect of all the scorns, and the calamities, yea, and all the gaudy glories of this world, with that unconcernedness for it, that indifference and simple innocence that is in children. He that receiveth not the Kingdom of Heaven as a little Child, cannot enter thereinto, saith Christ: True indeed, when the Son of God must become a little child, that he may open the Kingdom of Heaven to Believers. Would you see what humility and lowliness becomes a Christian? see the God of Christians on his Royal Birth-day. A person of the Trinity, that he may take upon him our Religion, takes upon him the form of a Servant; and He that was equal with God, must make himself of no Reputation, if he mean to settle and be the Example of our profession.

Chrysol.

Mat. 18. 3.

Phil. 2. 6, 7.

sion. And then, when will our *high spirits*;  
 those that value an *huffe* of Reputation more  
 than their own *souls*, and set it above God  
 himself, when will these become *Christians*?  
 Is there any more uncouth or detestable thing  
 in the whole world, then to see the *great Lord*  
 of Heaven become a *little one*, and man that's  
 less then nothing *magnifie* himself? to see Di-  
 vinity *empty it self*, and him that is a worm,  
*swell* and be *puffed up*: to see the *Son of God*  
 descend from Heaven, and the *sons of Earth*  
 climbing on heaps of wealth, which they pile  
 up, as the *old Gyants* did *bills upon hills*, as if  
 they would invade that Throne which He  
 came down from: and as if *they* also were  
*set for the fall of many*, throwing every body  
 down that but stands near them, either in  
 their way or *prospect*. Would you see how  
 little value all those interests that recommend  
 this world, are of to *Christians*? see the  
*Founder* of them choose the opposite extreame:  
 not onely to discover to us, these are no ac-  
 cessions to felicity, *This Child* was the *Son of*  
*God* without them: but to let us see that we  
 must make the same choice too, when ever  
 any of those interests affront a duty, or soli-  
 cite



cite a good Conscience, whensoever indeed they are not reconcileable with innocence, sincerity, and ingenuity. It was the want of this disposition and temper that did make the Jews reject our Saviour. They could not endure to think of a Religion that would not promise them to fill their basket, and to set them high above all Nations of the Earth, and whose appearance was not great and splendid, but lookt thin and maigre, and whose Principles and Promises shew'd like the Curses of their Law, call'd for sufferings, and did promise persecution, therefore they rejected him that brought it, and so this Child was for the fall of many in Israel.

-183. This Child is for the fall of many by the holiness of his Religion: while the strictness of the Doctrine which he brings, by reason of mens great propensions to wickedness, and their inability to resist against their Vices, will make them set themselves against it, both by word and deed: for they will contradict and speak ill of, yea, they will openly renounce, and fall away from it and him.

-184. For that reason they will contradict, speak ill of Him and of his Doctrines: This is said expressly

Deut. 28.  
1. 5.

Mar. 10 30

Isai. 11. 10.

Mat. 10. 25.

Mar. 3. 22.

Psalm. 69.

10. 21, 12.

expressly in the last words of my Text, He is for a sign that shall be spoken against; that is, that very holiness both of his Life and Doctrine, that shall make him signal, it shall make him be derided and blasphem'd. As if his being a <sup>Ensign</sup> for an Ensigne lifted up, a Standard for all Nations, were not for them to betake themselves to, but to level all their batteries against. Accordingly we find they call'd him Beelzebub, because he cast out Devils. And all this was foretold: for although he were fairer then the children of men, Psal. 45. yet Isa. 53. It is said, He hath no form nor comeliness, when we shall see him, there is no beauty in him, that we should desire him, he is despised and rejected of men. Surely, because his holiness did cloud and darken all his graces. Devotion in a countenance does writh and discompose it, prints deformity upon it, and eyes lifted up with ardency, look as bad as eyes distorted, set awry. Nay Majesty, when it was most severe and pious, never yet could guard Religion from these scorns. David, that great and holy King, sayes of himself, I wept and chasten'd my self with fasting, and that was turn'd to my reproach, as if Repentance were among his crimes, and he must be

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correct-

corrected for his discipline. I put on Sack-cloth also, and they jested upon me, they that sat in the gate spake against me, and the Drunkards made Songs upon me. Sure these jolly men are not companions to those Angels, in whose presence there is joy over one sinner that repenteth; that his vertue should be a rejoycing, and a song to them too. Certainly the penitent mans tears do not fill their chearful bowls, nor his groans make those airs which they set their drunken catches to. But that we may be sure it never will be otherwise, St. Peter tells us, *That in the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts.* Now the men of our dayes have the luck to obey Scripture thus far as to make that Prophecy to come to pass; for those scoffers are come in power and great glory. The Psalmist tells us of a chair of scorners, as if these were the only men that speak *ex cathedra*: and sure scoffs and taunts at Religion are the onely things that may be talk'd with confidence: a loud: They imprint an Authority on what is said, and conversations that are most insipied on all other scores, get accompt as they come up towards this practise: hence they gain degrees, commence ingenious as they border

Luk. 15. 10

2 Pet. 3. 3.

Psal. 1. 1.

on these *Atheistical* and *irreligious blasphemies*; and when it is *pure scorne*, then it is in the *Chaire*.

But it stays not there; For 2. Upon the same account of strictness of Religion, men will fall off from, and openly renounce both *Christ and his Religion*. This is that our Saviour himself found, *Light* (saith he) *is come in to the world, and men lov'd darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil*. And he said of the *Pharisees*, *They repented not that they might believe*, as knowing it impossible that they could venture to believe that *Doctrine* which condemn'd those courses they would not repent of.

And if I should affirm, that it is nothing else but mens *unwillingness to be oblig'd* to those things, which if there be a *God*, and a *Religion* which this *Child* was set to institute, they must account themselves *oblig'd* to; nothing else but this, which makes them *so unwilling to believe a God or Christ*; yea, openly renounce them both, and their Religion, I should have for this, not onely the late instance of a Nation in the *Indies*, which by institution of the *Portugals*, was easily perswaded to embrace the

Joh. 3. 19.

Mat. 21. 32.

Congo.

the Christian Creed, and was Baptiz'd into our Faith; but when they were requir'd to lead their lives according to *Christs* Precepts, and renounce their *Heathen Licences*, they chose rather to renounce their *Creed* and *Saviour*, and return'd instantly to their indulgent *Heathenisme*. But to this experience, give me leave to add this reason, that it is not the *difficulty* of the *mysteries of faith*, and their being above our *comprehension*, which makes them not to be receiv'd, because there are as great difficulties in things that we are certain of. For in the very *sphere of Reason*, within the lines and measures of her own *infallability*, in things of which she does assure her self by *diagrams* and *sense*, yet she is as much amaz'd as at those objects in the *highest and remotest Regions of faith*, and *Mathematicks* hath her *Paradoxes* that stand in as great danger of a contradiction as any of *Religions mysteries*, while reason cannot *cape* what she *demonstrates*, but is to seek how those things can be *possible* which she proves *most certaine*, and they are *incomprehensible* to her, even when they are *most evident*: and then sure if we can think there is a *God*, we must needs think *He* can do things

*Myster. Cut  
vocari so-  
let) Assump-  
toricum &  
Angul. con-  
tingent. &c*



we cannot comprehend, when it is plain our reason cannot comprehend what she her self does find out and create. It is not therefore contradiction to Reason, but to Appetite, that makes things of Religion so incredible, which I thus demonstrate to the *Atheist*.

Those very difficulties, to avoid which, he denies a God; to wit, *Those of an Eternal Being that is of himself*; these very things he must and does acknowledge in the being of the world, if that either be it self Eternal (as the *Atheist* of the *Peripatetick* Tribe will have it) or else if its *atomes*, out of which it was con-creted, were: (as those of *Epicurus* heard assert.) In a word, if they say the world or its materials were made, they grant a God that made it; If they say they were not made, they assert then an *Eternal Being of its self*; that is, They allow those difficulties for which they pretend to deny a God.

There being therefore the same difficulties, (Greater I could prove them, from the diverse natures of corporeal, and spiritual beings, for we are sure, in bodies that are still in motion, and so subject to succession, those things are impossible, but if there be a Being that

that is *not in motion*, & by consequence, not subject to the *laws of our time*, all these knots untie themselves, those difficulties vanish & have no place: But to say no more: then I have shew'd, *there being the same difficulties*, in the *Atheists hypothesis* as in the other, 'tis apparent, not the difficulties of *belief*, but *practice*, make him fix upon his own against the *common notions* of the world. So, that 'tis not his *understanding*, but his *appetite* frames his *hypothesis*, & without figure, 'tis his *will* that he *believes* with. And it is most evident, that because men do not love the *precepts of Religion*, would not have them be their *duty*, therefore they would have the *Doctrines* of it not be *truths*, and in this they are the *Disciples* only of their lusts, & because they cannot resolve to be otherwise, therefore they resolve not to be *Christ's Disciples*, but reject him for his holy *Doctrines* sake: and so *this Child is for the fall of many*.

But it were strange if upon this account, *Christ* should be for the fall of any of us; who have learnt a trick to reconcile his *severe Doctrines*, and our *Sins* together. Where *Vice* most abounds, though it be willful, and men persevere in it, they are so far from finding



any reason to fall off from him, or from his Gospel for this, that they therefore take the *stronger hold* of it, rely upon Him with the *bolder, stronger confidences*. As if good old Simeon were mistaken, when he thought, because men would not leave those sins which Christ so threatned, therefore they would leave him: because they could not beare those his hard sayings, to pull out the *lust* and the *Eye too*: cast away the treasures of *unrighteousness*, and the *right hand* that receives them also; therefore they would cast off him, for, for this reason they beake themselves to him more eagerly, devolve and cast themselves upon him with assurance. 'Tis possible indeed that the new *Christians & Indians*, might believe themselves oblig'd to lead their lives according to the vow that they had made in Baptisme, knew not how to live a contradiction to be *Christian Pagans*; therefore thought it absolutely necessary, to renounce the one, and to reject Christ and his *strict Religion* was easier they thought. Our Saviour also might suppose, that when he brought *light* into the world, men would not receive that *light*, because their deeds were evil: But our modern wickednesses

that

that are of the true Eagle kind, are educated, bred up to endure, and to *desse* the light; our deeds of night have learn'd to face both Sun and Men, yea and face the Sun of Righteousness, and the light of those flames that are to receive them. Our Saviour told the Pharisees indeed, that that they repented not, that they might believe, for thinking it impossible they could assent to what he did affirm, except they would consent to what he did command. He therefore thought they were not able to believe, because they would not purpose to amend. But there is nothing difficult in this to us, who at the same time, are so perfectly resolv'd that every threat of Gospel is so divine truth, as that we assure our selves, that we could be content to die Martyrs to the truth of them, rather then renounce one tittle of them; yet even then are Martyrs to those lusts and passions which those threats belong to: Who, at once, believe this Book of God, that saies, *except ye repent ye shall all perish*; and believe also, that notwithstanding we do not repent, yet by Believing we shall scape, not perish, but be sav'd. And is not this directly to believe our selves into damnation?

the

Luk. 13. 3.

the third and the great fall, which this Child is set for.

3. *This Child is for the fall of many, to wit, of all those, who on these, or any other grounds do not believe in, or do not obey him, who shall therefore fall into Eternal ruine.*

This our Saviour does affirm, St. John 3. 19. *This is the condemnation that light came into the world, &c. This does aggravate the guilt, and sentence. We were fal'n before indeed in Adam: and I dare not undertake to be so learned to say whether; to determine with some of them, that was but a fall from Paradise into the grave, and we were forfeit to death only: But I may adventure to affirm, that in the second Adam, sinners finally impenitent shall fall much farther then we did in the first Adam. Now their pit shall have no bottom, but this light that came to lighten them, shall be to them consuming fire, and everlasting burnings. And all reason in the world. For, upon that fall of ours in Adam, help was offer'd us: an easie way, not only to repair those ruines, but to better infinitely that estate which we were fal'n from; and a way that cost God dear*  
to

to purchase, cost him, not this *Incarnation* only, but the *Death* and *Passion* of his *Son*, and diverse other blessed methods *Salvation* : Now if we *refuse* the mercy of all this, and *scorn* these miracles of condescending goodness, and *desie* those methods, that he makes use of, to raise us from our fall, it is apparent we *provoke* and *choose* deeper ruine ; this refusal hath in it such desperate malignity, as to poyson this great mercy of the *Incarnataion*, and all the rest. 'Tis but a small thing to say, that they who *Stumble at this Rock of their Salvation*, spurning at it by their wilful disobedience, that these make an infinite mass of loving-kindness to be lost upon them, so as that *Salvation cannot save them* ; for alas *Salvation* ruins them the deeper, & *this Child* is for *their fall*. The condition they were forfeit to before by reason of their breach of the first covenant, was advantage, comfortable in comparison of that which Christ dos put them in: *This is the Condemnation*, that he came into the world: and it had been infinitely better for them that *this child too, had never been born*. The unreform'd have the least reason in the world to solemnize this festival, they do but

E

celebrate

celebrate the birth of their own ruine, bow down, and do reverence to their fall: had it not been for this, they had not gon to so severe an Hell. So that they do but entertain the great occasion of their greater condemnation. Such it proves to them, & that it might be so, He was fore-ordin'd for it: *Kara*, This Child is set for the fall of many, which dos lead me to Gods Councel in all this: my next part.

This Child is set for the fall of many, even by Gods direct appointment, for saith Grotius, *Accedo iis qui putant non nudum eventum sed & consilium Dei significari.* I am of their opinion, who understand not the success alone, but the designe of this Childs coming, and Gods counsel in it is intended here. And without disputing of Gods antecedent will, and consequent, this is safely said: God design'd this Child should be such an one, that they who had no inclinations for *Virtue*, would not entertain the love of it, but counted it a mean pedantick thing, and all its Rules & Laws, unreasonable servitude, these loose men would certainly reject Him and his Doctrine, which were so severe and strict. Those that did pretend friendship for *Virtue*, and a service for Religion, but withal

Grot. in  
loc.



withal must be allow'd to maintain correspondence with the world, seek the honours and advantages of Earth, and will trespass on Religion where it enters with these, break with Virtue when their interests cannot consist with it, these false hypocritical pretenders, should be offended with the mean condition of this Child, and of his followers in this world, and with the poor spirited principles of his Religion. In summe, they that upon these, or any other grounds finally disbelieve, or disobey him, God design'd this Child to be a means of bringing sorer punishments, even to everlasting ruine upon such.

A black decree this one would think. He that had so much kindness for mankind, to give away the onely Son, both of his Nature, his Affections, and his Bosome to them; could he then designe that gift to be the ruine of the greatest part of men? This Child, Simeon said but just before my Text, is Gods Salvation, which he had prepar'd before all people; and does he now say God hath set him for their fall? The Angels preach'd this was a Birth that brought good tidings of great joy that should be to all people; and is there so much comfort in de-

struction, that most men should rejoyce at that which is ordeined to be the great occasion of it to them?

But we have no reason to complaine: 'tis not unkind to deny Mercy to them that refuse the offers of it, that will not accept Salvation, when their God himself does come to bring it to them: tenders it upon condition of accepting and amending: which if they despise, and preferre Hell before Repentance, choose sin rather then Gods blessed retributions, 'tis but reason to deny them what they will not have, and let them take their chasen ruine; will their judgement which they will themselves, set and ordeine Him to be that to them, which themselves do ordeine, and make him to be to themselves. So St. Peter says expressly:

1 Pet. 2. 8.

He is a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence to them who being disobedient stumble at the word, whereunto they were appointed. Disobedience where it is obdurate, alters so the temper of our God, that it makes Him who swears he would not have the sinner die, yet set out his son to make such sinners fall into eternal death. Makes judgement triumph over mercy, even in

mercy



mercy; and while God was plotting an Incarnation for the everlasting safety of mankind, prevails with him to decree ruins by the means of that salvation; to decree even in the midst of all those strivings of his mercies, that that Issue of his kindness should be for the fall of such as they. Oh! let such consider, whether they are likely to escape that which is set and order'd for them by God? Whether they can hope for a redemption, when the only great Redeemer is appointed for the Instrument of their destruction; and God is so bent on their ruine, that to purchase it he gives this Child his Son. Yea, when he did look down upon this Son in Agonies, and on the Cross, in the midst of that sad prospect, yet the ruine of such sinners, which he there beheld in his Sons blood, was a delight to him, that also was a sacrifice, and a sacrifice of a sweet smell to him. For Saint Paul says, *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that perish, because we are the savour of death unto death to them:* As if their brimstone did ascend like Incense, shed a perfume up to God, and their everlasting burnings were his Altar-fires, kindled his holocausts; and He may well be pleased with it, for He order'd it.

'Tis

2Cor. 2. 15

'Tis true indeed, *this Child riding as in Triumph*, in the midst of his *Hosannas*, when he saw one *City*, whose *fall* he was set for on this very account; He was so far from being pleas'd with it, that He *wept over it in pity*. But alas, that onely more declares the most *deplor'd and desperate* condition of such sinners. *Blessed Saviour!* Hadst thou no *blood* to shed for them? *nothing* but *tears*? or didst thou *weep* to think thy very *bloodshed* does but make their *guilt* more *crimson*, who refuse the mercy of that *bloodshed* all the time that is offer'd? *Sad* is their state that can find no *pity* in the *tears* of *God*, and *remediless* their condition for whom all that the *Son of God* could do, was to *weep over them*, all that he did do for them, *was to be their fall*; Too sad a part indeed for *Festival Solemnity*, very improper for a *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*. To celebrate the greatest act of kindness the *All-mighty* could design onely by the *miseries* it did occasion, to magnifie the vast descent of *God*, from *Heaven* down to *Earth*, onely by reason of the *fall* of man into the *lowest Hell* of which that was the cause. My Text hath better things in view: the greatness of that

*fall*

fall does but add height to that Resurrection which He also is the cause of: For, *Behold this Child is set for the rising again of many*: my remaining part.

Rising again, does not particularly and only refer to the foregoing fall here in the Text, which this Child did occasion, as I shew'd you, but to the state wherein all mankind, both in its nature and its customs, lay ingulf'd, the state of ignorance and sin: a state from which recovery is properly *extra nos*, a resurrection and a reviving in this life, and so call'd in Scripture often; as Ephes. 5. 14. *Wherefore he saith, I wake thou that sleepest & arise in me, and arise from the dead.* And Rom. 6. 13. *Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield your selves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.* Now to raise us from the death of sin, into the life of Righteousness by the amendment of our own lives, to recover us into a state of virtue, is the thing this Child is said here to be set for. This was that which God thought worth an Incarnation: neither was there any greater thing in the prospect of his everlasting Counsel, when He did decree his Son into the world, then that

that ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~offer'd~~, He is set for this. The Word was made flesh, to teach, practise, and perswade to Vertue: To make men reform their lives, was valued at the price of a person of the Trinity. Piety and his exinanition, yea, his blood and life, were set at the same rates, All of Him giv'n for our recovery.

Heb. i. 3.

The time would faile me if I should attempt only to name the various methods He makes use of to effect this. How this Child that was the brightness of his Fathers glory, came to lighten us, shining in his Doctrine and Example: how he sent more light, The fiery Tongues, Illuminations of the Holy Ghost to guide us in the ways of piety: how he suffer'd Agonies and Death for sin to appale and fright us from it. How He rose again to confirm Judgement to us, to demonstrate the rewards of immortality to them that will repent, and leave their sins, and everlasting torments to those that refuse this Grace; Grace purchased with the blood of God, to enable them to repent and leave. Besides all these, The Arts and Mesnage of his Providence, in preventing and following us by Mercies and by Judgments, importuning us, and timeing all his blessed Methods

thods of Salvation to our most advantage. Arts, God knows, too many, if they serve us onely to *resist*, and turn to *wantonness* and *aggravation*; if we make no other use of Grace but this, to *sin against*, and *overcome* all Grace, and make it *bolster Vice*, by teaching it to be an encouragement to go on in it; from some hopes we entertain by reason of *this Child*, instead of doing that which he was *set*, decreed to make us *do*.

And really I would be glad to see this *everlasting Counsel* of the Lord had had some good effects, some, though never so little happy execution of this *great decree*, and that which God *ordin'd from all Eternity*, upon such glorious and magnificent terms, were come to pass in any kind; Now, certainly there are no evident signs of any great *recovery* this *Child* hath wrought among us in the world that's now call'd *Christian*. After those omnipotent inforcives to a vertuous life, which he did work out, if we take a prospect of both *worlds*, it would be hard to know which were the *Heathen*; and there would appear scarce any other notice of a *Christ* among us, but that we *blaspheme* Him or *deride* Him. Sure I am, there



there are no footsteps of Him in the lives of the community of men: and I am certaine that you cannot shew me any *Heathen* age outgoing ours, either in *loosenesses* and *foul effeminacies*, or in *sordidness* and *base injustice*, or in *frauds* and *falseness*, or *malignity*, *hypocrisie* or *treachery*, or to name no more, even in the *lowest*, *most ignoble*, *disfranchised* sorts of *Vice*. In fine, men are now as *Earthy*, *Sensual*, yea, and *Devilish*, as when *Sins* and *Devils* were their *Gods*.

Yea, I must needs say, that those times of dark and *Heathen* ignorance, were in many times of *shining* vertue; and the little spark of *light* within them, brake out through all obstructions into a *glory* of *goodness*, to the wonder and *confusion* of most *Christians*: 'Tis true, we are pritty well reveng'd on them for setting us *Examples* so reproachful to us; calling their *Heroick* actions, *splendidi peccata*, only *beauteous* sins, and well *fue'd* wickednesses, and we have a reason for it, because they never heard of *Christ*; whose *Name* and *Merit*, is most certain, is the only thing that can give *value* and *acceptance* to mens best performances: while, on the other side, we

*Christi-*



*Christians* comfort and secure our selves in our transgressions from *this Child*, and from his Name. But if *this Child* were set to raise us up from *sin*, and to establish *stronger arguments* for a *good life* then the *Heathen* ever heard of, more *especial Divine engagements* to vertue; then if their vertues were, because they never heard of these engagements to them, *sins*, what censure will be past upon their actions that *know* all those engagements and *despise* them? unless to *defy knowledge*, and *provoke* against all Divine obligations, all that God could lay, shall prove more tollerable then to labour to obey *without them*, *without knowing why*. 'Tis true, they had not heard it may be of that Name, then which *there is no other Name under Heaven given unto men whereby they may be saved*. Yet they endeavour'd in some measure to do that, which He that owns that Name, and wrought the Covenant of those Salvations, does require. We know that Name, and have it call'd upon us, and know too, That *he that names that Name*, (that calls himself a *Christian*, owns the being a retainer to the *Holy Jesus*) *must depart from Iniquity*, otherwise it is no name of Sal-

Act 4. 12.

2 Tim. 2. 19

vation to him, yet we never mind the doing that; and then which hath the better Plea? The *Heathens* sure were better, though he were *not vertuous*.

And if so, give me leave to tell you, how not only *this Child*, but *this Resurrection* too is for our fall.

Verse 10.

Verse 28.

Ibid.

In the first *Chapter* to the *Romans*, we shall find those *Heathens*, when they did neglect to follow the direction of that light within them, by which they were able to discover in some measure, *the invisible things of God*, when they did no longer care to retain *God in their knowledge*; then they quickly left off to be men; and when they ceas'd to hearken to their reason, they soon fell into a *reprobate sense*. What was it else to change *God* into *stocks and stones*, and *Worship* into most *abominable wickedness*? to make the *Vilest creatures Deities*, and the *foulest actions Religion*: to turne a *disease* into a *God*, and a *sin* into *Devotion*: a *stupidity*, which nothing else but *Gods desertion* and *reasons too*, could have betray'd them to, and made them guilty of.

And then, if by how much *greater light* and *means* we have resisted, we shall be proportionably

tionably *more vile* in the consequents of doing so, keep at equal rates of distance from those *Heathens*, that the aggravations of our guilt stand at from theirs, Whether, *alas!* are we like to fall?

'Tis an amazing reflection, one would tremble to consider, how the *Christian* world does seem to hasten into that condition which *St Paul* does there decipher: You would think that Chapter were our *Character*: but that we have reason to expect we shall fall *lower* into much *more vile affections* than those *Heathens* did, as having fall'n down from a *greater height* than they.

Consider whether men do not declare *they like not to retain God in their thoughts*, when they endeavour to *dispute* and to *deride* him too out of the *World!* 'Tis true, they have not set up any *sins* or *monsters* in their *Temples* yet, as they did: but if they can empty them of *God* and *Christ*, and their *Religion*, and make room, we may imagine easily *whose* *Votaries* they will be, that live as if they thought themselves *unhappy* that they had not liv'd in those *good Pagan* dayes, when they might have *sin'd* with *devotion*, been most *wickedly Religious*,

Religious, and most God-like in chastities and other virtues; I dare say none of our fine Gentlemen, or our great Wits, would have been Atheists or irreligious then.

Think whether those are not already in that reprobate sense St. Paul does speak of, who have cast off all discriminating notions, of good or evil, who say in their hearts, &c. affirm openly, there are none such in truth and nature: and if we should try by those effects, verse 29, 30, 31. or by that essential signature, 32. verse, they not only commit such things, but have pleasure in them that do them; which because they cannot have from those commissions, when they do not commit them, therefore their debauch'd minds must be satisfied there is no evil in those doings, and must reap the pleasure only of such satisfactions: that is, have the satisfactions and pleasures onely of a reprobate sense. In fine, (because I dare not prosecute the character) Men sink so fast, as if they were resolv'd to fall as far below humanity, as this Child did below his Divinity.

O do not you thus. break decrees, frustrate and overthrow the everlasting counsel of Gods will for good to you. He set, ordained this Child.

Child for your *rising again* : do not throw your selves down into ruine in despite of his *Predestinations*. He hath *carried up* your nature into Heaven, plac'd *Flesh* in an union with *Divinity*, set it there at the *right hand of God* in Glory; do not you *debase* and *drag* it down again to Earth and Hell by *worldliness* and *carnal sensuality*. Make appear this Child hath *rais'd* you up, already made a *resurrection* of your *souls* and your *affections*; they converse, and trade in Heaven: and that you do not degenerate from that nature of yours that is there. Then *this Child* who is *Himself the Resurrection and the Life*, will raise up your Bodies too, and make them *like his glorious body*, by the *working of his mighty power*, by which he is able to *subdue all things to himself*. To whom with the *Father*, and the *H. Ghost* be all *Blessing, Power and Praise, Dominion and Glory* for Evermore.

Joh. 1. 29

Phil. 3. 21.

F I N I S.